

Author Platform Rocket

Email Marketing for Authors: How To Transform Subscribers Into Buyers

Handout for Part 3:

How to Create Enticing Subject Lines & Engaging Content

As we discussed in the webinar, part of creating engaging content is giving back to the people who have signed up for your mailing list. This is a fast and furious listing of some helpful tools we'll be using in the upcoming webinars to do just that. Primarily, this handout gives you tools to create FREEBIES for your Personal Reader Campaign or the Reader Club you'll be setting up for your subscribers. There are two types of freebies I recommend you create, and they're not only very inexpensively, they're directly related to your writing and your books: **graphics** and **short fiction**.

Graphics

As a graphic designer and cover artist, I had the advantage of creating free images for my readers to download. The point was to create freebies that would be a value-add to subscribing to my mailing list. People don't like to hear you squawk on about yourself or your books all the time. Everyone has the question running in their head: WIIFM – What's in it for me?

Why should I sign up for your newsletter? What do I get out of it?

I honestly didn't think anyone would use these or would care. My point was...I'm giving them something! If they don't like it, well...sorry. However, the readers have been indeed downloading them and using them and praising me for them! They're sharing them on social media, too!

But you don't have to be a graphic designer to come up with your own. CANVA TO THE RESCUE!

Canva - <http://canva.com>

This is a FREE online graphic tool for people who don't know how to do graphics. If you don't know how to use Photoshop (or even have it) and don't have the money to pay a graphic designer to create simple images for you, then this is the tool for you! What you can create with Canva:

- Newsletter headers and banners
- Social Media graphics with quotes from your books and reviews
- FREEBIES for your subscribers (e.g., desktop wallpapers, smartphone backgrounds)
- Social Media images for your street teams to use

Canva has free and inexpensive graphics (as little as \$1 each) for backgrounds and wallpapers. Also, they have great templates you can use with fancy writing. I'll be demonstrating this tool in Session 5.

Arial's Photoshop Templates & Graphic Ideas

If you have Photoshop, I have some templates to share! BUT you'll want to check out the materials I put in this [folder on my Google Drive](#), which contains a document with freebie ideas and other suggestions. I shared some of the examples of images I created for myself and my best friend AJ Nuest during the presentation – and they're in this folder as well. Read the document I have in the templates folder for ideas on how to get REALLY great images through MightyDeals.com and DepositPhotos.com.

Short Fiction

Do you have some old short stories that never saw the light of day? This is a great opportunity to take those out, dust them off and publish them on your blog!

Don't have old short stories you can use? Create new ones!! They don't really need to be that long. I'm recommending you do "Flash Fiction" which is a very short piece of fiction (1000 words or less) that has a beginning, a middle and an end. I know some authors can't write short fiction...and I thought so, too, until I took a short story writing class with Lisa Kessler. She REALLY helped me wrap my brain about how to tackle writing short and now I LOVE to do it! Now she's offering that same instruction online! [CLICK HERE](#) to visit her online writing classes and the "52 Stories in 52 Weeks" is the class I recommend. Well, heck...I recommend ALL her stuff. She taught a short story class in San Diego and now she does one-on-one mentoring through her online classes. GREAT STUFF! Be sure to take the class!

Lisa talks about it on her page, but I also share my experience at my website and what I dubbed the "Ray Bradbury Challenge". [CLICK HERE](#) to see complete details and instructions for this challenge on my website.

5-Minute Writing Prompt Exercise

Until you can take Lisa's class, here's a writing exercise you can do that doesn't require a beginning, middle and end structure. And it only takes 5 minutes a week to write it and you just spend a little time posting it on your blog. GREAT way to come up with free content that still shows off your writing. Here's how you do it:

- Pick a writing prompt (links below)
- Set a timer for 5 minutes
- Ready...set...WRITE!
- When the timer goes off, finish your closing ideas (you want to leave it on a cliffhanger, not in the middle of a sentence)

Now post it on your blog and share!

Sharing Your Short Fiction

The webinar was indeed fast and furious and I know I went through a lot of the material like the Energizer Bunny! So I'll slow down here a bit and give you the detailed instructions of how you can use the short fiction above to not only drive traffic to your website and provide content for your newsletter, but it will also encourage readers to share your stories on social media! Remember – this session was about creating ENGAGING content. You want your readers involved in their membership...and this is a fabulous way to do that!

1. **Create your short fiction piece** – Craft your short story (or edited it) in whatever writing tool you enjoy using (e.g., MS Word, Scrivener, OneNote, etc.).
2. **Post it on your blog** – Copy and paste that puppy over to your blog or your website. Be sure it has all the formatting you want – italics, bold, etc. – which you may have used when drafting it. Publish the post so you can get the link to it. If you know how to get a permalink to a DRAFTED post without publishing it, all the better, but some people don't know how to do that for a draft.
3. **Prep for Social Media** – In this step, you'll be creating social media posts that will link back to your blog post where your full short story is located.
 - a. **Facebook** – Create a short, catchy post on your Author Page on Facebook, which will link to your blog post. [CLICK HERE](#) for an example I did for my short story called *Mystery Shoppers*. I recommend posting it on your author page, then use your profile to share the post. I noticed I get more people seeing what I post on my profile versus my author page (grumble...thank you very much, Facebook. :)) Then you'll want to grab the permalink to the post you just created or have it handy. [CLICK HERE](#) to see a short YouTube video on how to do that.
 - b. **Other Social Media** – Just like you did with Facebook, create a post anywhere else you'd like readers to share your blog post (e.g., Google+, Pinterest, Tsu, Ello...wherever), which links to your blog post. Grab that permalink or have it handy.
 - c. **Twitter** – Visit <http://clicktotweet.com> and use your Twitter account to sign in. Use their free tool to pre-draft a tweet, making it easy for others to tweet for you. [CLICK HERE](#) to see ClickToTweet in action. NOTE: You *can* track clicks on those tweets, but you only get 5 free click-to-tweet posts on which you can track statistics, so I would save those for really important campaigns. Just uncheck all the boxes that ask about tracking. [CLICK HERE](#) to watch a great video of how to use ClickToTweet in your blog post! Then you'll be grabbing that ClickToTweet link or have it handy.
4. **Link to Social Media** – Once you've created your social media posts, go back to your blog article you created and at both the top and the bottom, create share links with a strong call to action. For example: Please Tweet about it: [CLICK TO TWEET](#). And Share it on Facebook: [CLICK HERE](#) and use the SHARE button.
5. **Create your automated email in your drip campaign** – Now go into your mailing list service and create a newsletter that will be included in your drip campaign chain of messages which will feature the short story or flash fiction. You'll want to be sure to include the following:
 - a. **Short Snippet** – Even 1000 words to include in a newsletter for a single entry is a bit long. I recommend keeping it very short and cut it off on a cliffhanger. My *Mystery Shoppers* ends on, "I hate to break the news to you, but your dead." The whole short story is about 883 words, but I only give them the first 219 words. Then I link to the story in my blog, but I also give them the social media links and encourage them to share.
 - b. **STRONG Call to Action (CTA) for Blog Post and Social Media** – TELL them what you want them to do and you can even use a nice big, fat button that says, "[CLICK HERE to see the twist ending!](#)" or similar. Use links like, "[CLICK HERE](#) to share on Facebook and if you use Twitter, [CLICK TO TWEET](#)." It really makes a difference!
 - c. **Pictures** – These are optional, but I love to include pictures that match the content of my message, whether it's the picture that inspired the story (like in my flash fiction story

[Seeing is Believing](#)), or a stock image illustrating the nature of the story (like my flash fiction story [The Claw!](#)). It breaks up the endless flow of text and really adds life to your newsletters. Keep them limited to 250 pixels wide. Nice size for smartphone screens.

So you have a full circle of links and posts that are all connected and supporting each other: A blog post that links to the social media shares, which links back to the blog post; and more importantly, a newsletter that now advertises your writing to all your subscribers, who in turn help you spread the word about your writing. All of us have created blog posts, and social media posts, and sent out newsletters...but we rarely connected all of them together where they feed each other and create a buzz! We just crossed our fingers and hoped someone would find our blog or social media pages by wandering around. Advertising these things to your mailing list now gives them direction, purpose and it's free content you're sharing with your subscribers that encourages them to get to know you through your writing!

Vanity URLs & Permalinks

Remember that Vanity URLs and permalinks are links that stay evergreen and therefore are great to include on marketing materials or links in the back of your books. Just like any short URL, they redirect the person to the URL you're targeting. For example: [This link is a Pretty Link](#) I use in the back of my books for Book 6 in my series, which (as of July 2016) has not yet been written (actual Pretty Link: <http://arialburnz.com/bbb06>). Right now, my Pretty Link directs people to my "Coming Soon" page and if you visit it, you'll notice it encourages people to sign up for my reader club so they can be informed of my new releases. I've had a LOT of people sign up for my newsletter through this link! It really works. When the book is published, I won't have to go back into all my published books and change the URL. I just go into Pretty Links and change the target URL from my "coming soon" page to the new buy page for Book 6.

If you don't have a WordPress site and cannot use the Pretty Links plugin, then try **BookLinker.net**.

- For WordPress sites – Pretty Links Plugin - <https://wordpress.org/plugins/pretty-link/>
- For authors who do not have a WordPress site, try ~~BookLinker.net~~ <http://www.booklinker.net/>
 - **CORRECTION:** I discovered that BookLinker.net is not a vanity URL option, but check it out as you still might find it useful. Instead, try...
 - **TinyCC** - <http://branded.tiny.cc/tiny/explore> - This is an alternative for those who do not have a WordPress website. Though you can customize your links and you can change which link the short URL goes to later, it will cost you \$10 a month. Personally, if you're going to spend \$10 a month for a short URL redirect with editing capabilities, get a WordPress website and use Pretty Links. You'll spend the same monthly fee for a WordPress site and you'll have more options. BUT getting a new WordPress up and running isn't as easy as paying \$10 a month.

Ideas for how to use Permalinks/Vanity URLs:

- **Newsletter** – For your newsletter sign-up, just in case you have to change services.
- **Future Books** – As mentioned above, links to books you haven't written yet so they have a page to land on AND they can sign up to be informed when you DO release the book. And none of the self-publishing platforms have ever had a problem to my Pretty Links linking to a landing page

showing all the online retailers. It's going to my website, so they're okay with the URL! I mentioned the landing page idea in the workflow we covered in Session #1.

- **Buy Links for Books** – Are you experimenting with self-publishing options? Are you going back and forth with trying out KDP Select and then all distribution channels? No problem! Create a permalink for each of your books, which you can use in your marketing efforts, and you'll never have to worry about the buy links changing. Just change the target URL on the back-end! For example: The Pretty Link for Book 1 in my series is <http://arialburnz.com/bbb01>. I used to have that link target the URL for a landing page on my website for Book 1, which had links to all the online retailers. When I switched the title to Kindle Unlimited, I changed the target URL from the landing page on my site to the Amazon buy page. I never had to worry that old links to my landing page wouldn't work...because my Pretty Link doesn't change...just where it points to does. :D I NEVER use direct buy links for my books anymore.

Links in this Document

- Canva – <http://canva.com>
- Google Drive Folder for Templates & Ideas:
https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B8ljxCAV3_wCQUJqZkhRMktTSHc
- Lisa Kessler's *52 Stories in 52 Weeks* class - <http://www.authorlisakessler.com/online-writing-classes/>
- Ray Bradbury Challenge Details - <http://www.arialburnz.com/ray-bradbury-challenge-defined/>
- Facebook post example for *Mystery Shoppers* flash fiction -
<https://www.facebook.com/authorarialburnz/posts/907555242705265>
- Video tutorial on how to get a permalink from a Facebook post -
<http://authorbank.net/fbpermalinkdemo>
- ClickToTweet
 - Website: <http://clicktotweet.com>
 - Example of a ClickToTweet link - <http://ctt.ec/jbeRU>
 - Demo on how to use ClickToTweet - <http://authorbank.net/click2tweetdemo>
- Example links of short stories mentioned above:
 - *Mystery Shoppers* - <http://www.arialburnz.com/WPC04>
 - *Seeing is Believing* - <http://www.arialburnz.com/WPC05>
 - *The Claw!* - <http://www.arialburnz.com/WPC06>

Additional Links and Resources

The 17 Best Email Subject Lines for Increasing Open Rates:

<http://www.mequoda.com/articles/audience-development/best-email-subject-lines/>

Writing Prompt Links:

- Writer's Digest: <http://www.writersdigest.com/prompts>
- Reddit Thread Writing Prompts: <https://www.reddit.com/r/WritingPrompts/>
- Think Written 365 Writing Prompts: <http://thinkwritten.com/365-creative-writing-prompts/>
- Do a search for "writing prompts" or "plot generator" on Google

Questions?

Try as I might, I know I can't be 100% effective in my communications. What sounds clear to me might be really confusing to you. No problem! If you have any questions about the ideas I've shared above, just email us at aprgiveaways@gmail.com and either I, Brenda or Jonny can answer your questions.

I hope you found this handout helpful and you're enjoying the webinars.

Thank you!!

Arial Burnz

Author of HOT Scottish Vampires